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BALL TO BALL
BILLIARDS

Foster, Edmund Foster

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PREFACE.

THIS little book was written with the hope that it would help the amateur player to get a little better knowledge of the action of the ball in "English," "Follow," "Draw" and "Massé."

Ball to ball billiards is the secret of big runs and the action of the ball is the foundation of billiard playing.

No shots will be illustrated in this book except such as are used to explain the action of the ball.

This book is not a record of champions or championships. Neither is it a useless lot of diagrams of shots, because if you cannot learn to play billiards with your cue in your hand, no book ever written, even by the greatest experts, will teach you the game of billiards.

In the following pages I shall tell you a lot of things that you know or may have a hazy idea about, but the reminder will help fix the point in your mind. All I hope for is to help you *think* it out for yourself, because it is *your thinking*, not mine, that combined with practice, will enable you to play better billiards.

"Bill Yards."

CHAPTER I.

TOOLS.

BILLIARD cues have been improved from time to time and are now made with less ornament but of better material and better workmanship. The ebony point section now used, makes a cue of greater rigidity and also makes a better balanced cue now that cues are made heavier than formerly.

Cues now average from 17 to 22 ounces, about fifteen years ago they averaged between 15 and 19 ounces. These heavier cues enable the majority of players to accomplish better results with less muscular effort and have improved their stroke as the weight of the cue does the work.

The cue and the tip are the most important tools and should be selected with care, because the player must depend on these to control the cue ball.

Most Room Owners have a large number of good cues to select from and they try to keep them well tipped. Spinks' Self-sticker Tips are a great labor saver and do away with the nuisance of glue.

The selection of a cue will depend on the individual, but should be heavy rather than light.

The build of the player will determine to some extent

the length of the cue. A short man should not select a long cue because it will interfere with a proper swing, and yet he needs as long a cue as possible in order to reach shots that are far away from the edge of the table. However there is not much difference between the longest and the shortest cues, never more than about 4 inches. Of course, a cue should be straight. Twine wrapped butts are much used and afford a very satisfactory grip.

The quality of the chalk is of greater importance than any of the other tools of the game, and the words of the "Wizard of Billiards," the late Jacob Schaefer; "I believe your chalk has done more to *improve* billiards than anything else in my time," is evidence that Spinks' chalk has more than any other chalk the quality most desired by the best billiard players.

The balls, the cloth and the table are the same for both players and most Room Owners try to keep their tables in shape for first-class play.

Cue tips made of leather, "Procedé," as the French call them, were made only in France for many years, the secret of their manufacture being handed down from father to son.

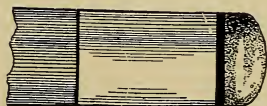
A good cue tip is of the utmost importance to the player because no matter what skill a player may have, he must impart that skill to the cue ball by the tip.

There have been many fads and fashions in the size and thickness of cue tips. Some years ago very large

tips were used (15 to 16 millimeters), later very small tips (10 to 12 millimeters), now most players use a medium size tip about 13 millimeters, No. 1 high. There are also fancies about the proper height or thickness of the tip, but a medium thickness about one-half the diameter has proved best, because a very thick leather cannot be made hard enough to hold its shape and a very thin leather does not have enough elasticity to take hold of the ball.

A player with an accurate eye and a good stroke can use a somewhat smaller tip than the average. The English game requires smaller balls and very much smaller tips than are used in the United States. The tips for the English game are made as small as 9 millimeters. These very small tips and balls need very accurate hitting and consequently it is better to select a fairly large tip rather than a small one.

A proper shape for the finished tip is shown in Fig. 1. You will notice that this tip is somewhat round, this shape gives a better ball contact or greater holding surface than a very flat tip.



(Fig. 1)

CHAPTER II.

POSITION.

POSITION at the Billiard table is of much more importance than most players realize, because a good stroke and accurate hitting cannot be developed with a faulty position. Many good players are handicapped by a bad position.

It is difficult to describe a correct position, but with the aid of the pictures and the following description, the player should be able to correct his faults and assume a good position. (Photos No. 1, 2 and 3.)

Stand facing the table and about two feet away from the edge, then take a step forward with the left foot, then turn the heel of the right foot toward the table, in other words, just swing on the ball of the right foot, you will then face the table, but with the body turned just a shade to the right, so that the right hip will not interfere with the swing of the cue. Next bend over and place your left hand on the table, stretch out well and settle back. If your position is correct a plumb line held between your eyes would drop right on to your cue (Photo No. 4), otherwise your aim will be bad. Brace yourself so that you are firm as a rock on both feet. You will then be at ease

and yet set and steady, so you can execute without strain or fatigue.

The "open bridge" is easier for most players than the "hook finger" bridge and allows a firmer support of the bridge hand, because all the finger tips are resting on the table and the fingers are well spread. (Photos No. 5 and 6.)

A player should practice to use both styles of bridge because they are both necessary to good billiards. (Photos No. 7 and 8.)

It is also good practice to hold the cue in the left hand, as this enables the player to make shots that would require the use of the "Artificial Bridge." Sometimes the artificial bridge is necessary and when using it do not elevate the butt of the cue any more than would be required to make the shot without the bridge.

In making your calculations look first at the position of all the balls on the table, then, when you have decided what shot you are going to attempt, get in position and look at the cue ball, making up your mind just where you intend to hit it. Next look at the object balls and decide just how far you intend to move them; this will help you judge the strength of stroke.

Always have in mind the necessity of driving one or both of the object balls as this will lead out the proper force. It does not matter whether you mean to drive a ball around the table or drive it a fraction of an inch, the rule holds good *always* to drive the object balls.



No. 1. Sizing up the shot.



No. 2. Step forward with the left foot, swing on ball of right foot. Notice position of the feet.



No 3. Ready to execute. Notice the easy yet solid position of the whole body.



No. 4. Notice the plumb line, showing the head exactly in line with the cue.

CHAPTER III.

STROKE.

THE control of the cue ball depends entirely on "Stroke"—that easy swing with a whip-like snap at the finish combined with judgment of force that makes the perfect "Stroke."

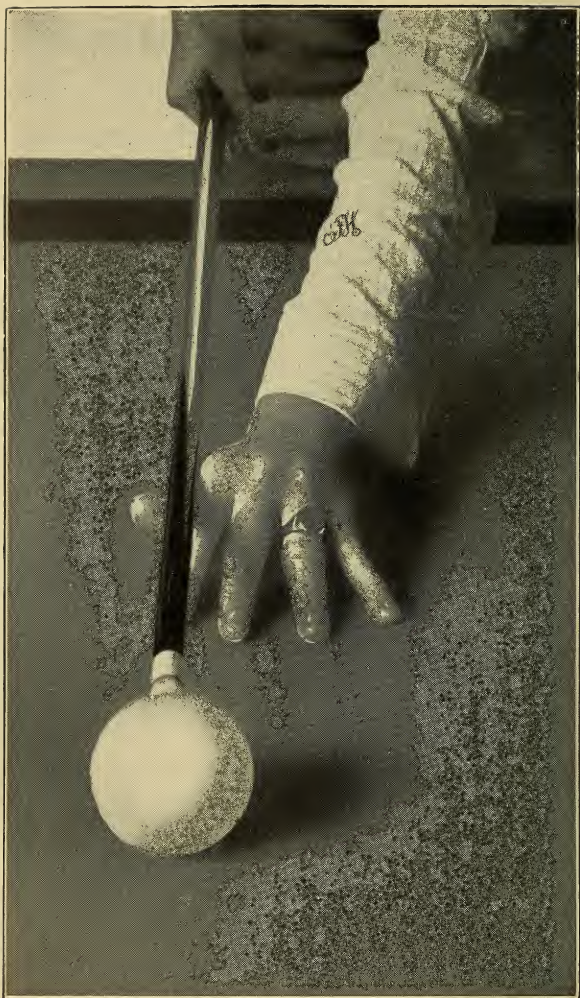
Grasp the cue about three or four inches nearer the butt than where the cue balances. The first finger and thumb should be used to hold the cue firmly at this point with the other fingers curled about the cue in an easy, natural manner. (Photo No. 3.) In this position the cue can be swung back and forth with ease; and in order to develop a pendulum-like swing the cue should swing not less than three times and not more than six times, before delivering the blow. (Photo No. 3, showing side view at table.) Then having previously made your calculations where you intend to hit the ball and how much force you wish to put into the stroke, you *close your hand* as the cue finishes the swing forward and deliver a blow that is made without effort and yet has a whip-like snap that imparts action to the ball.

In making the swing let the cue stop as near the ball as possible without hitting it—one inch is about a safe

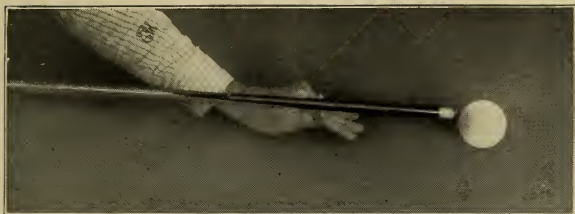
distance. The hand (of the player of average height) should swing nine (9) to ten (10) inches. A very tall man would develop a longer swing and a very short man somewhat shorter swing. Don't make the swing too fast, let it move naturally and the weight of the cue will determine the speed. Fast motions do not make fast players, be deliberate and take plenty of time to develop the swing. Most important of all in developing a stroke, is to swing the cue back and forth in a perfectly straight line, any tendency to wobble or swing sidewise is sure to spoil accurate hitting. Imagine your cue is in a guide like the piston of an engine.

In making a "follow" shot, the elbow should be dropped at the finish of the stroke, else the cue point will have a tendency to dip and prevent the cue from going straight through the ball.

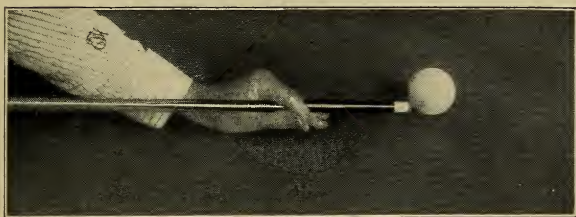
Let the weight of the cue do the work and above all let the cue follow through the ball. (Drawing B.) Position and stroke are so closely allied that they should be studied carefully together.



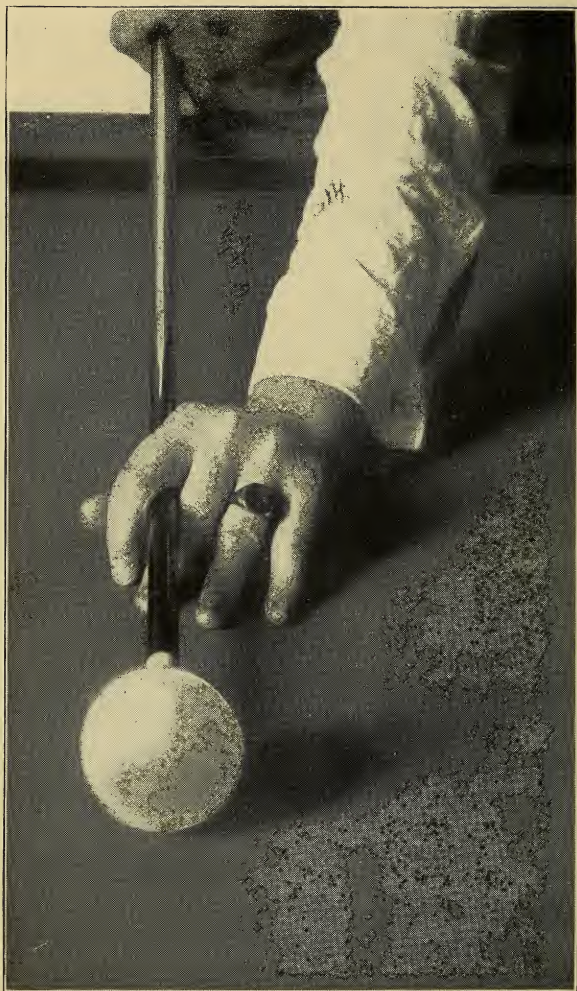
No. 5. Front view of open bridge, Notice the fingers well spread.



No. 6. Side view of open bridge. Notice the thumb is touching the first finger, knuckles well raised to bring point of cue up for a "follow" stroke.



No. 7. Side view of hook finger bridge. Notice the thumb and first finger.



No. 8. Front view hook finger bridge. An excellent bridge for certain shots, the "draw" especially.

CHAPTER IV.

"ENGLISH."

THE reason for beginning this chapter on "English" by showing how to hit a ball *without* "English" is because many players are unable to hit a ball where they intend and hit a ball with "English," although they thought they were hitting it straight. Also many players seem to think that "English" makes a ball by some "hokus pokus," they do not know just what, accomplish things in the way of counting that would not be possible if the ball was hit straight. Few players can hit a ball just where they intend and a simple practice shot will show how much they miss the spot.

Place the cue ball only, on the table, right in line with the "billiard spot" and within easy reach and shoot for the center diamond on the end cushion. (Drawing A.) You will be astonished at the difficulty of making the ball return exactly in the middle of the table.

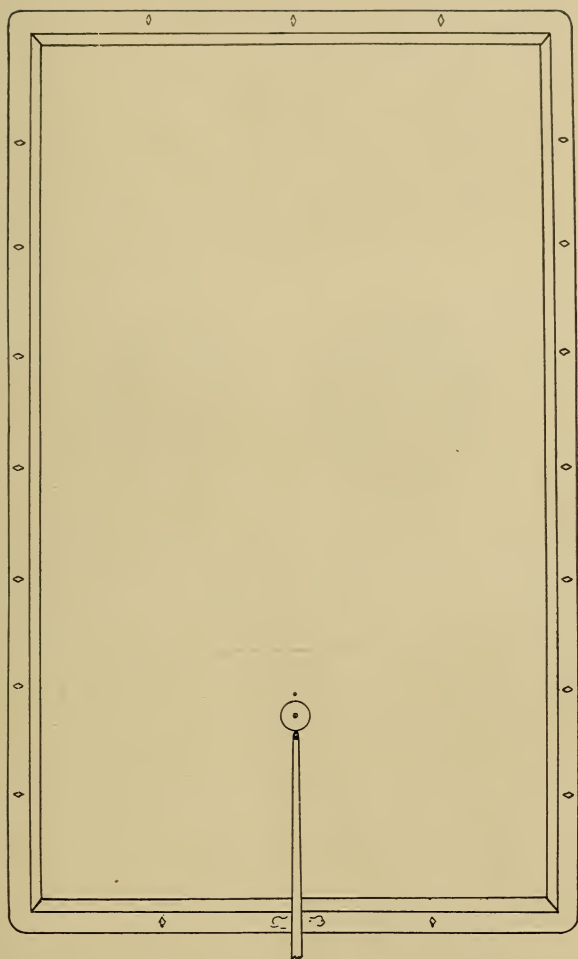
This is an excellent practice shot and can be made interesting for two players in trying to see which can return the ball nearest the center line.

The harder the stroke the more difficult it becomes to hit the ball exactly in the center. Players with an

exceptionally strong stroke can drive a ball four times the length of a table, almost forty feet, but few can hit a ball with this amount of strength, and have it travel back and forth the length of the table and not travel out of a straight line more than about four inches.

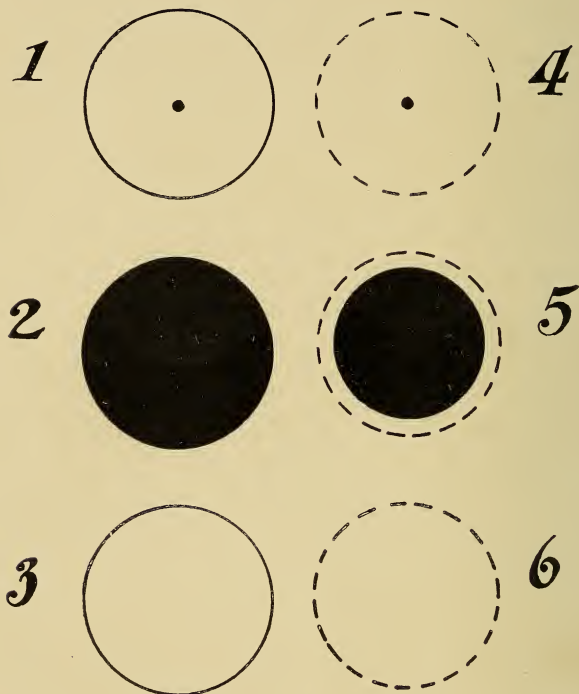
It will readily be seen that with the ability to hit a ball exactly where you intend, any amount of "English" that is possible can be given without danger of making a miscue. A good player can give a ball a lot of "English" even with a very gentle stroke because he hits it clean and allows his stroke to follow through the ball. (Drawing B.) If two players match themselves against each other, trying to give the greatest amount of "English" without a miscue, the practice will be valuable and interesting to both of them.

"English" is rotation or spin imparted to a ball by hitting it on one side of the center. In order to judge how fast a ball is spinning when hit with "English," attach a moistened bit of paper to the side of the ball. To many players a slow stroke seems to give more "English" to a ball than a fast one, this is because the eye cannot follow the quickly moving ball. It is true, however, that a very fast ball does not take the same angle from the cushion that a slow one does, because of yielding of the cushion which allows the fast ball to sink in deeper and consequently it comes away straighter.



A. Showing set up for practice of accurate hitting.

Key to Balls Shown on Diagram Drawings



Before Making the Shot

Figure Number One—Indicates the cue ball.

Figure Number Two—The *first object* ball.

Figure Number Three—The *second object* ball.

After the Shot Has Been Made

Figure Number Four—The cue ball.

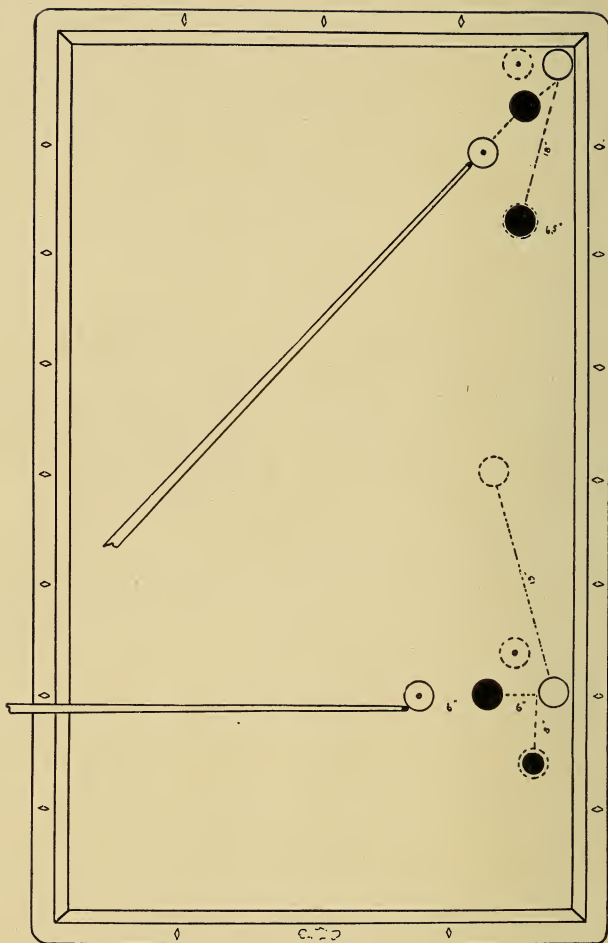
Figure Number Five—The *first object* ball.

Figure Number Six—The *second object* ball.

Can "English" be imparted to the object ball by the cue ball? It can, but only in a very slight degree and this imparted "English" is always the reverse of that of the cue ball. The "English" imparted to the object ball, is so slight that no player can see the object ball "spin." It is only effective at short distances and when the cue ball has been hit with extreme "English" and with a good clean follow through stroke.

The following line up, kiss shot, is a good example of what imparted "English" will do to the object ball. (Drawing C.) In playing shots with extreme 'English' many players lose the correct aim and either miss the first object ball or hit it too full. A good way to prevent this is to first aim at the center of the cue ball and then move the bridge hand either to the right or left to make the proper amount of "English."

In close ball to ball play it is good practice to use a "Draw" stroke with "English;" the draw checks the spread of the object balls and the "English" prevents "freezing."



C. "English" *imparted* to object ball. Must be hit a clean stroke with "Follow" and "English" or the second object ball will miss the "Kiss" with the cue ball.

CHAPTER V.

"FOLLOW."

THE "follow" is a most useful stroke and is one that few players can execute well, mainly, because they do not let the *weight of the cue do the work*, and because they fail to let the cue "*follow*" *through the cue ball* with the cue held level or nearly so. (Photos No. 9 and 10.)

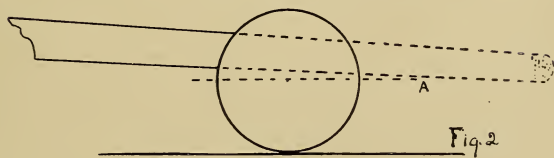
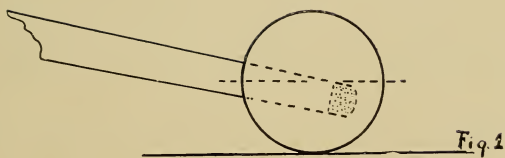
A ball to "follow" must be hit well above its center, this causes the ball to spin or rotate in the direction that it is moving and when it hits the first object ball, this spin causes it to move the object ball without checking hardly at all the *speed of the cue ball*.

The point at which the cue ball should strike the first object ball is never far from the center and practice alone will enable the player to pick this spot.

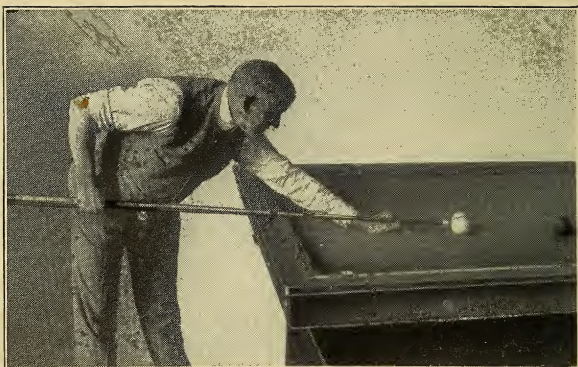
A good "follow" at long distance requires accurate hitting without any English and with good "follow action" on the cue ball. Most players hit with too much strength and ruin the position for the next shot by driving the first object ball too far.

Try a "follow" about as set up (Drawing D) and see if you can make the shot and leave the balls together. You will notice it takes a good clean "follow" through

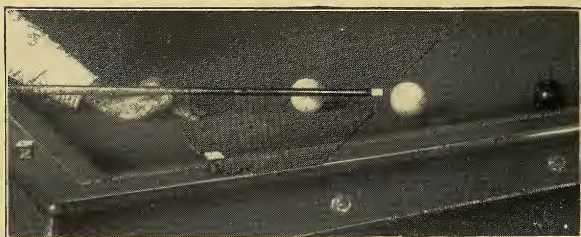
“stroke” without much speed, but with lots of “follow action” on the cue ball so that it will hit the second object ball. As players say it must have the “legs.”



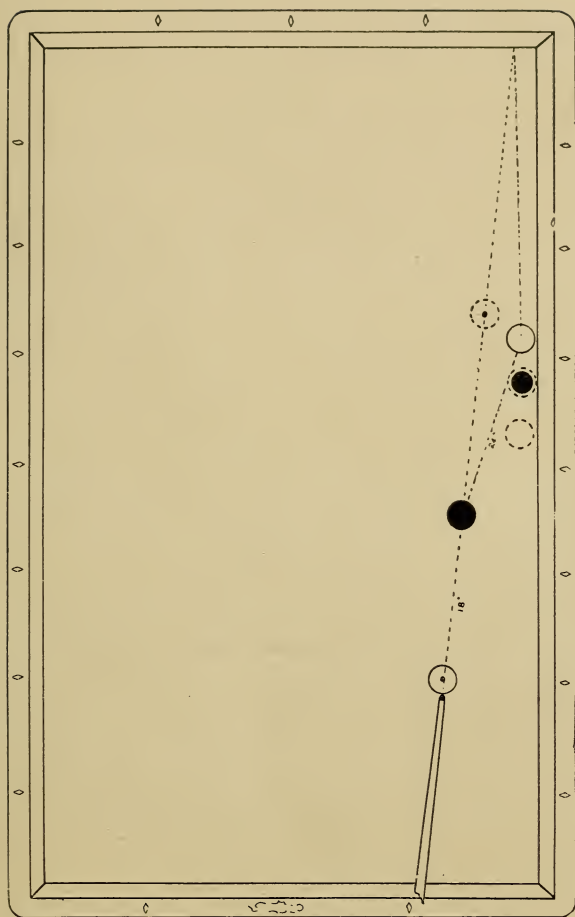
B. Figure 1 shows short, jerky stroke, not at all effective. Figure 2 shows perfect "follow" stroke, cue leaves the ball above the center, A.



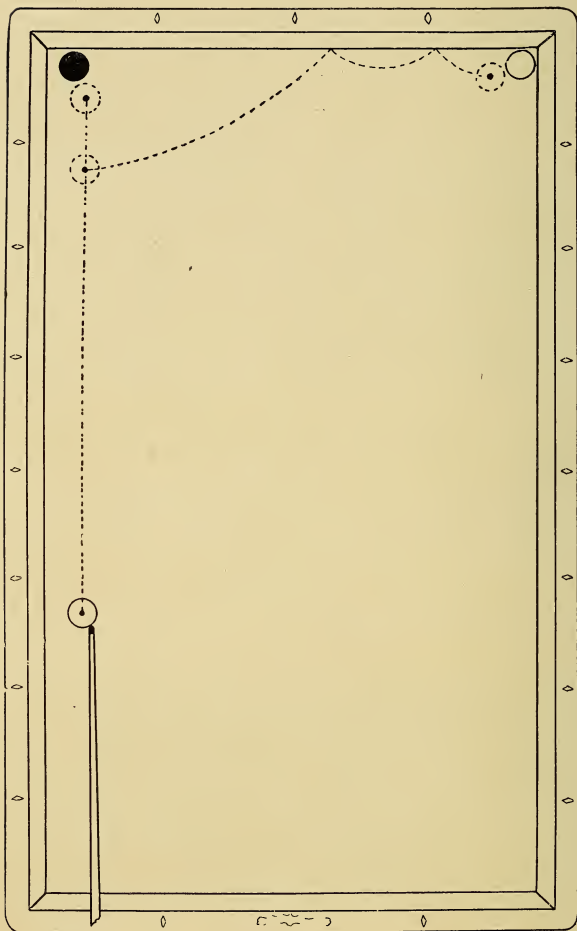
No. 9. The two white balls set up side by side to illustrate the necessity of letting the cue follow through the ball to get a "follow" action.



No. 10. Same as No 9, only showing the finish of the stroke. The point of the cue has followed through about seven (7) inches.



D. Showing a set up to practice for a good "follow" stroke. Properly executed, this leaves the balls together.



H. Showing extreme "Follow" action with lots of "English."

CHAPTER VI.

DRAW.

THERE are many fair players who cannot make a "Draw" shot, and yet this shot is not at all difficult when you understand the action of the ball. It is a most useful shot and no player can hope to make very big runs until he can execute the "Draw" with ease and certainty.

The action of the cue ball in a "Draw" shot is to *spin* toward the player and to *slide* in the direction that it is struck, and when it strikes the object ball and is still *spinning toward the player*, it recoils because its forward motion is stopped and the "spin" working against the friction of the cloth, causes it to return.

The average player is very apt to pull his cue back with a jerk, seeming to think he can thereby pull the cue ball, but he loses the very effect he is trying to accomplish, because he does not let the cue follow through the ball and give it all the "spin" possible.

To illustrate. If you wished to open one of those turnstile doors and leave it whirling you would not just hit it a tap and withdraw your hand with a jerk, no, you would keep on pushing until you were clear through and out at the other side—same action applies

to the stroke with a cue—you *must let the cue follow through the ball to get action*. (Photo No. 11.)

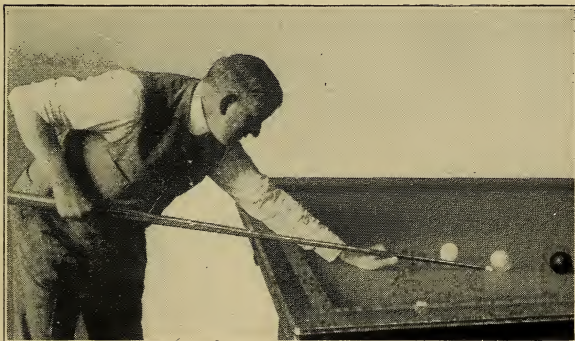
In making a "Draw" shot do not attempt to strike the cue ball too low, because this will cause the ball to jump and may tear the cloth. (Photos No. 12 and 13.)

It frequently happens that a "Draw" shot has to be made when the cue ball is on or very near the cushion, this makes it necessary to elevate the butt of the cue almost to the position for a "Massé," and yet a "Draw" is possible if the object ball is not so far away that the cue ball loses its *reverse spin* before it strikes the object ball. (Photo No. 14.)

A good many players who make a "Draw" shot with difficulty seem to think that "English" helps the stroke, on the contrary it not only does not help at all, but often makes a miscue. It might be well to state right here that in making any kind of a shot where extreme action must be had on the cue ball, that chalking the cue tip *before* making the shot will save many a game. A "Draw" with "English" is the best test for the quality of chalk or tip. In this shot the ball has the least resistance to the tip, and miscues most often happen.



No. 11. Position for a "Draw" shot.



No. 12. Showing the finish of a "Draw" stroke. Notice the distance the cue point has followed through both white balls which were side by side at the start. Notice also the cue point is resting on the cloth.



- No. 13. Try this "draw" for accurate hitting. All three balls lined up on the cushion. Try it on both left hand and right hand cushions. Notice the difficulty of making the cue ball return without *rolling* out from cushion.



No. 14. "Half Massé." "Draw" off the red. Much more certain and easier to execute than standing on tiptoe to use the regular grip on the cue.

CHAPTER VII.

MASSÉ

(This French word means to rub or pinch.)

IN billiards the action of the stroke is to pinch the ball against the cloth in such a manner that it *spins* and *slides* at the same time, similar to a "Draw" stroke, except that the cue is held almost perpendicular. You will note in the Photos No. 15 and 16 the way to hold the cue and also the usual "Massé" bridge with the tips of the fingers resting on the table. The stiff arm bridge (Photo No. 17) may be used when the balls are away from the edge of the table. This style of bridge is excellent for practicing with the cue ball only, as the player can more easily see the whole of the cue ball and the part he is hitting. He can also get a better knowledge of the various angles at which the cue should be held. The more nearly vertical the cue is held, the closer the "Massé."

The player should stand firmly on both feet as this gives a steady position. Many players seem to think it necessary to rise up on their toes or to stand on

one foot, this causes a strain and is very likely to interfere with the correct aim.

The execution of a "Massé" shot is very difficult to describe, but an attempt will be made to show the principles and the player will have at least a guide to help him in his practice.

In order to indicate the part of the cue ball to be struck I will divide it into quarters and number them one, two, three and four. (Drawing E.) Quarter No. 1 is always at the left hand as you face the shot and is usually the quarter at which the cue is aimed. Quarter No. 2 would be struck if the cue ball should line up a trifle to the left of the object balls.

In making the "Massé" shown in Drawing F, the cue is held almost vertical but inclined to the left and toward the player slightly. The cue ball is struck in No. 1 quarter and about half way between the center and edge of the ball. This stroke if properly executed will drive the cue ball forward just hitting the first object ball, then the spin working against the friction of the cloth pulls the ball on a curve just touching lightly the second object ball.

The reason the cue ball makes this curve is because it is struck on one side of the center, and is spinning on an axis, not perpendicular, but at an angle, depending on two factors, one is the angle at which the cue is held and the other is the distance away from the center which the cue ball is struck.

Drawing K shows a follow "Massé," that is, the cue ball follows through the first object ball. The cue ball strikes the first object ball on the right hand side due to the curve and drives it away from the second object ball. This shot requires a clean, sharp stroke.

In all "Massé" shots a good solid tip is absolutely necessary and it's a good rule to chalk the tip carefully before each shot so you can feel the tip "bite" the ball.

The "Massé" stroke is made entirely with the wrist. Let the weight of the cue do the work. It is necessary to reach up well with the right hand so as to grasp the cue at the point where it balances.

The "Massé" is a most fascinating shot and it is worthy of a lot of study because it can be used to great advantage in close ball to ball play.

The angle at which the cue is held has a marked effect on the direction of the cue ball. If you will try the shot shown in Drawing G with the cue held at various angles you will note that the cue ball will travel away, or towards the object ball and that in order to govern the direction, the cue ball must not only be hit in the right spot but the angle of the cue must be also correct. Practice, practice, and then practice, is the only way to solve the mystery of the "Massé."



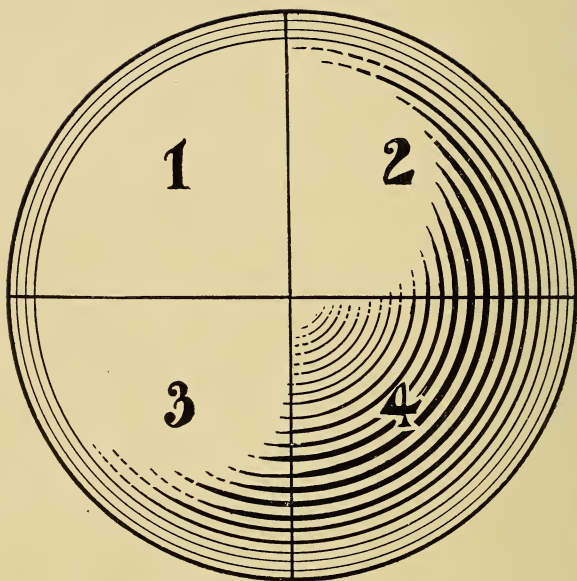
No. 15. Position for "Massé." Notice the bridge hand.



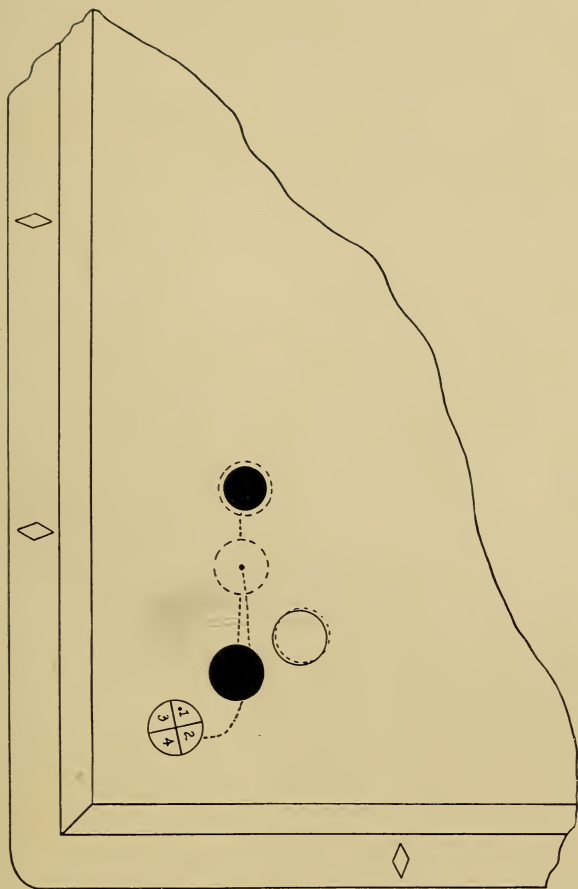
No. 16. "Massé." Notice that both feet are on the floor. Also notice the fingers of the bridge hand showing the brace obtained by spreading the fingers.



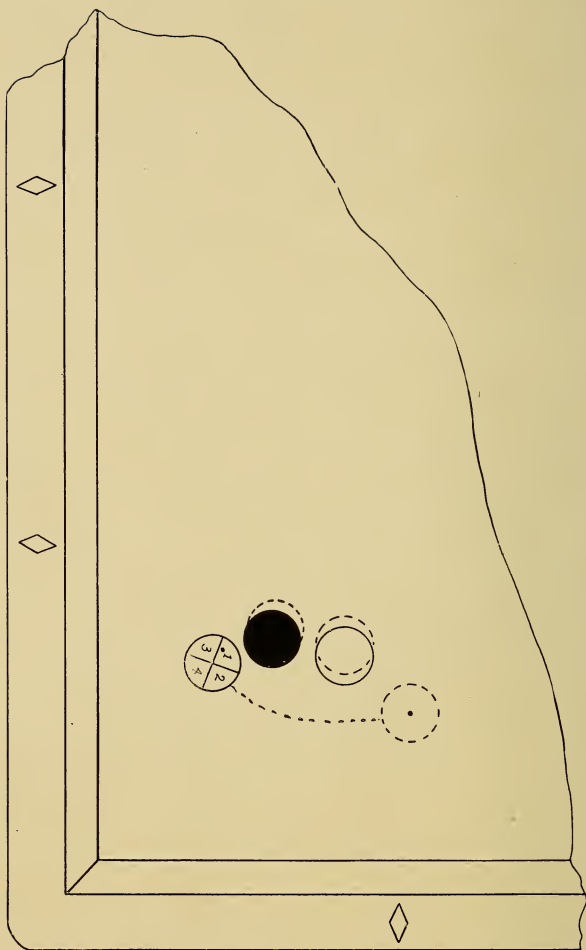
No. 17. Stiff arm "Massé" bridge, excellent for practice work and also for certain "Massé" shots where the regular "Massé" bridge is not possible.



E. Showing the ball divided into Quarters, to help explain the Massé.



G. Massé "Follow."



F. Massé shot. Indicating point to be hit in quarter No. 1, shown by the dot.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTROL OF OBJECT BALLS.

MANY good players try to accomplish too much in controlling *both* object balls. The apparent ease with which professionals amass a big run, is marvelous. None of the shots are at all difficult, just "spreads," "draws" and "follows," an occasional drive to one cushion, all played within a small space at one end of the table. It looks so easy you wonder if they will ever stop—then they miss a simple shot that any novice could make. The reason for missing this simple shot is because the player is so intent on controlling the balls for the next shot, that he did not get quite the effect intended on the shot missed.

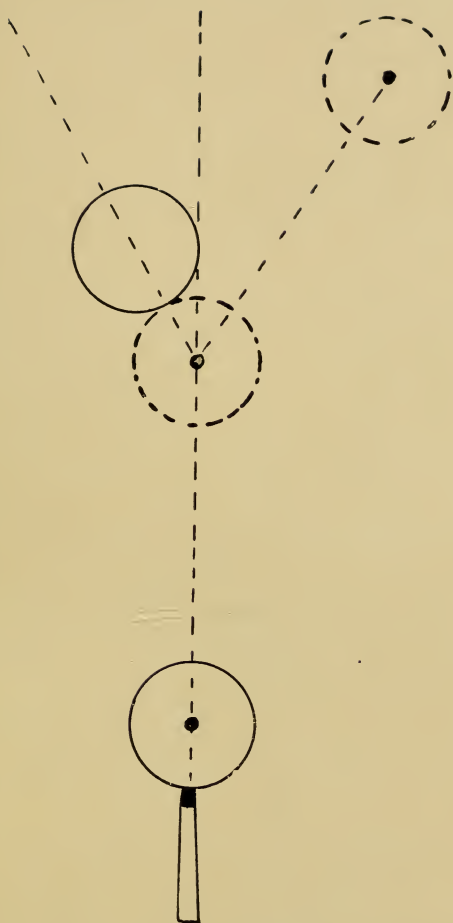
The control of the object balls is what makes it possible to make big runs, but don't try to imitate the professionals until you have learned some of the fundamental principles of the game.

Perhaps one of the ball to ball shots that comes up most frequently, and one that is important in controlling the first object ball, is what I will call a *half ball spread*. (Drawing I.) To make this shot strike the cue ball without any "English," a little above the center

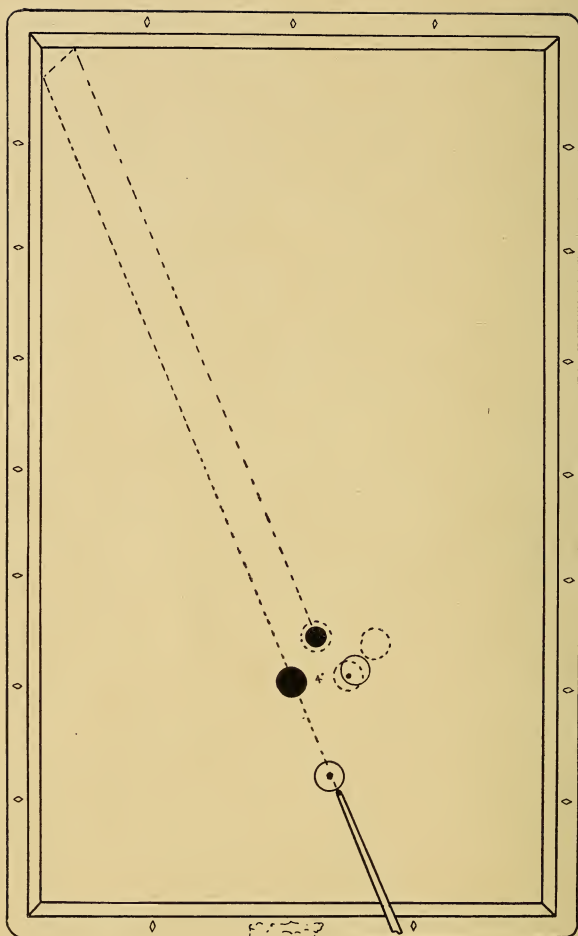
so that it will hit the first object ball in such a way that the center of the cue ball is in line with the edge of the first object ball. In making this half ball shot, the force of the cue ball is evenly divided with the first object ball so that both cue ball and object ball will travel almost exactly the same distance after contact. (See Drawing J—the Opening Shot.) This half ball spread always results in the same angle except when made with “English,” “Draw” or extreme force.

The half ball spread and its variations are of prime importance in the control of the first object ball.

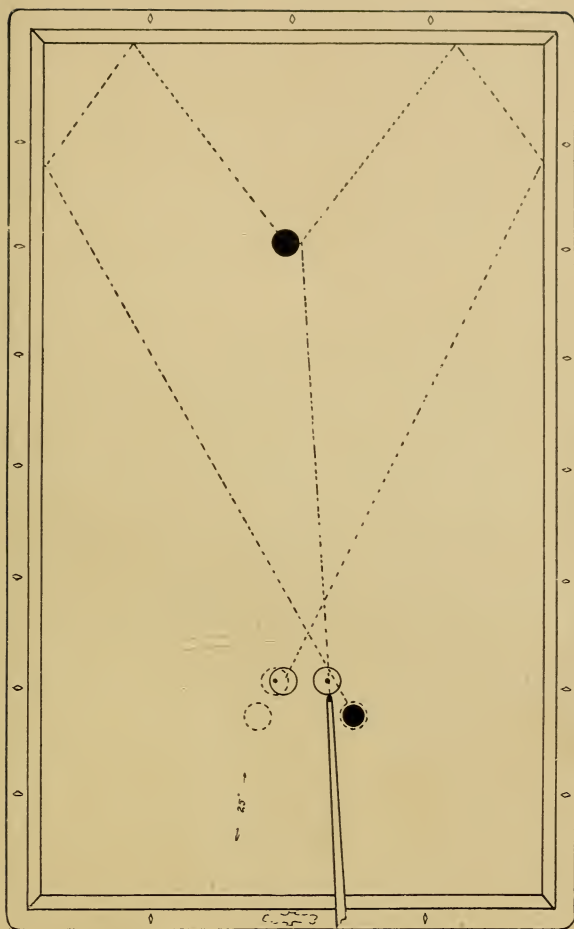
An object ball struck nearer its center than half ball, becomes a “follow” if the cue ball is hit above its center, a wider spread if the cue ball is hit below the center and a “Dead ball drive” if hit exactly at the center or a trifle below. (Drawing K.)



I. Showing the angle the cue ball takes in a half ball spread.



- K. Dead ball drive. Hit the cue ball a trifle below the center. Aim to hit the first object ball a shade to the right of the center. Properly executed the cue ball just counts on the second object ball and the first object ball is driven to the corner and back, leaving excellent position for the next shot.



J. The opening shot. Set the cue ball close to the white and use a little right hand "English." Properly executed, will leave the balls together. Hit the red exactly half ball.

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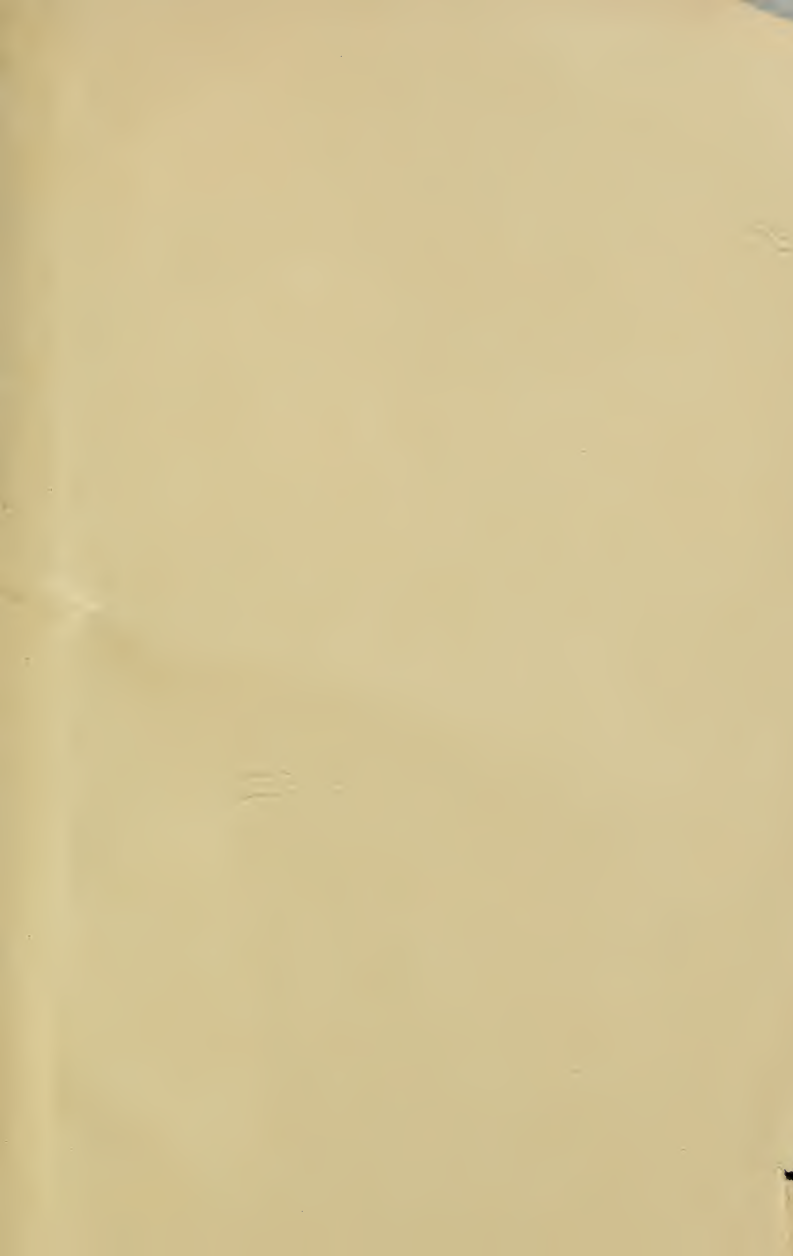
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